EVOLUTION OF THE TOWNSCAPE OF DARBHAGA*

BY

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The city of Darbhanga occupies a prominent place among the towns of North Bihar plains. It is a city, the beginning of which is lost in antiquity. It has mostly been the capital of rulers and this factor appears to have had a profound effect upon the pattern of the city as it then existed. This paper, attempts a general historico-geographic approach by showing the effects of successive changing dynasties and rulers on the evolving urban Pattern, because "the real quality of cities in their regional relations can only be adequately appreciated in their light of history, in other words, through the historico-geographic approach".[1]

Darbhanga is the administrative headquarters of the district of same name. It is the seventh largest city of Bihar and is next to Muzaffarpur which is the chief administrative and regional centre of North Bihar plains. It is an inland town situated on the left bank levee of the Baghmati river and covers an area of about seven square miles. The river Bagmati is also known as Kamla nala by the local inhabitants. It flows from north to south skirting the western boundary of the city. The town is elongated being confined between the river on the one side and the railway line on the other. The city is about 70 Kms. south of the Nepal border. It lies at rail distance of 90 Kms. from Muzaffarpur, 200 Kms. from Patna and 89 Kms. from Barauni and is located at Lat. 26°08′ N. and Long. 85°54′ E.

Site and Situation

Regarding the site considerations of Darbhanga, the problem of defence seems to be of paramount significance. The urban community settled here in the medieval age under the shadow of castles and forts. Darbhanga occupies an excellent natural defensive site on the meander loop of the river. But why this particular site was selected and not any other site further upstream or down stream ? Why on river Baghmati

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1 Dickinson, R. E., "*The City in History*", a review of Lewis Mumford's book, Annals of the Association of American Geographers (September), 1962, Vol, 52, p. 300.

and not on river Kamla or why this particular settlement was selected among the several settlements that existed on the banks of Baghmati ? In answering these questions it is not Darbhanga of today that we must consider, nor even the town when it had grown to a recognizable size but the "humble collecton of huts that was its origin and which gradually grew up in importance".[2] The original site of Darbhanga presented 'obstacles to free entry by the attackers',[3] as it occupied an excellent defensive site on the river. In the plain which is drained by rivers which are usually in spate during the rains an elevation of even a few feet above the flood level may create an advantageous site for settlements.[4] This difference of only a few feet in the level of alluvium has had a most marked influence both on the location of the original settlement and of its later suburban growth.[5]

The original site could not be on Kamla river because this river is more destructive and devastating in nature than the Baghmati. This river changes its course from year to year and its beds are found all over the north of Madhubani Subdivision.[6] The short, gentle and winding Little Baghmati is a calm and quiet river. The selection of the present site and development of its cultural forces, however, also reflect the arbitrary judgment and preference of the founders and of the many persons who later directed and contributed to the expansion of urban form.

Topography

The spread of urban form is closely related to physical features such as stream course, degree of slope, character of underlying alluvium and soils and drainage pattern.[7] Throughout its subsequent growth the physical nature of the terrain upon which the city spread has influenced the form. The city and its surrounding area presents a dead level plain area with no marked topographical features. It has an average elevation of 158′ above sea level. It is a town of tanks, the largest of these being Gangasagar, Dighi, Harahi, and Lakshmi Sagar. The only perceptible

2 O'Malley, *District Gazetteer, Darbhanga*, 1907. p. 58.

3 Smailes, A. E., *The Geography of Towns*, London, 1966, p. 43.

4 Singh, R. L., 'Evolution of Settlements in Middle Ganga Valley'. National Geographical Journal of India, Vol. I, Part II, December, 1955, p. 82.

5 Brookfield, H. C., 'The georaphical Study of the Urban Sprawl of W. Cities', Indian Geographical Society, Silver Jubilee Souvenir, May, 1952, p. 102.

6 Choudhary, P. C. Roy, Bihar District Gazetteers, Darbhanga, 1964, pp. 4-6.

7 Zierer, Cliford, M, 'Melbourne as Functional Centre'. Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Vol. XXXI, December, 1941, No. 4, p. 257.

topographical features are uplands and lowlands. The main slope of the area is towards the S. E. while the secondary slope is towards the south. The high ground stretching from Bishunpur and Champanagar to Urdu Bazar is clearly recognized as the upland on the levee of the river. In the S. W. part of the city we find the lowest ground where the population is sparse and people utilize this area for market gardening. Soils are deep and easily cultivated. Rainfall amounts to 50″.[8] Scattered orchards and gardens are characteristics of suburban margins. In a few places the vegetational cover breaks the monotony of the buildings.

Origin

There are various interesting legends regarding the origin of the name of Darbhanga. According to one legend the name of Darbhanga is derived from Duar-Banga (Dvara-Banga) or Dar-i-Bangal. This deri-vation appears, however, to be philologically impossible and also histori-cally incorrect, as the division between Bengal and Bihar has always been much further to the east. It seems more probably that the name derived from that of the traditional founder of the town, one Darbhangi Khan, a Muhammadan freebooter, about whom little or nothing is known.[9]

Who was this Darbhangi Khan, the traditional founder of the town ? When was it founded ? We have so far no material to conclusi-vely accertain these. The earliest reference to this name is found in a work Bhṛngadūta by Pandit Ganganath Jha a Maithili Sanskrit writer of 17th Century A. D. The Bhṛngadūta reference is as follows :

"Tasyah pathah paramabimalam Sannipiyabbirama,
Garam Kamayudh 'Darbhanga' Rajedhani Mupeyah
Bhrataryasyah Surapatipuri murdhva madhasitanam
Sandhasrevi hasati dhavalejoytisam kaitanene".[10]

The above verse illustrates that the city of Darbhanga was full of palaces and bedecked with flowers and light. It indicates its existence

8 The average annual rainfall received at Darbhanga is 50″ of which 45″ during the June-July-August-September months and 5″ during the winter season. The mean monthly temperature varies from 42°F in January to 110°F in Mid. June. Prevailing wind directions during the summer months are east to west and during the winter months west to east. The cold weather season is characterized by bright, warm and envigorating days and temperature falls after the sun sets. The hot weather season is characterized by scorching heat and loo winds.

9 Choudhary, P. C. Roy, Bihar District Gazetteer, Darbhanga, p. 1.

10 Singh, Kumar Ganga Nand, 'Origin of Darbhanga' *JBRS*, Vol. XLVIII, 1-4, p. 31.

even in the 17th century and it must have been established before the author composed the verse. A plausible theory about the origin of the name of Darbhanga appears to be that when Maharaja Siva Simha of the Oinwar dynasty fought a battle with Sultan Ibrahim Shah in 1406 and his capital Gajrathpura with his forces was completely defeated and crushed. The place was thus named Darbhanga to commemorate the breaking up (Bhanga) of Siva Simha's force (Dala). The word dala became dada or dara in common parlance and took the form of Dadabhanga or Darbhanga.[11]

Evolution of the townscape during Medieval period

(a) *Harisimhapur : the legendary city of Harisimhadeva* :—The foundation of the town goes back to the middle of the medieval period, when the excellent site appealed to the king Ram Simhadeva and the site was selected as capital which is supposed to have flourished in the 14th centuary A. D. under the Karnata dynasty. 'He is said to have excavated a large tank and sponsored an attractive garden at Darbhanga called after his name Ramdighi and Rambagh respectively'[12] Ram Simha was succeeded by his son Harisimhadeva "who credited with having founded the city of Harisimhapur"[13] (Fig. 1).

Harisimhadeva built a marvellous and beautiful city between the river Baghmati and the Dighi. It served a a military outpost and trading centre. It incorporated a vast network of other smaller settlements. It was dependent upon the agricultural resources of the immediate area. It was a fortified settlement with walls, gates and towers, but outside the walls there were ordinary houses. To the east of the walls were water-bodies known as the fish pond which provided fish for the religious purposes. There is no way of ascertaining the extent and shape of this legendary city as there is no account anywhere. But city was located in the area now known as Ramdighi tanks and Rambagh.

(b) *Tugluqpur* :—Harisimhadeva was one of the powerful Hindu chiefs. He entered into active alliance with rebellious Bahadur Shah of Bengal and helped him greatly to seize the kingdom of Bengal. Both of them flouted the authority of Ghiyasuddin Tugluq who started his fateful eastern campaign in 1323-24 with the object of conquering Tirhut and Bengal. Harisimhadeva was defeated and went to Nepal. The Tuglaq conquest

11 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

12 Choudhary, P. C. Roy, Bihar District Gazetteer, Darbhanga, p. 35.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

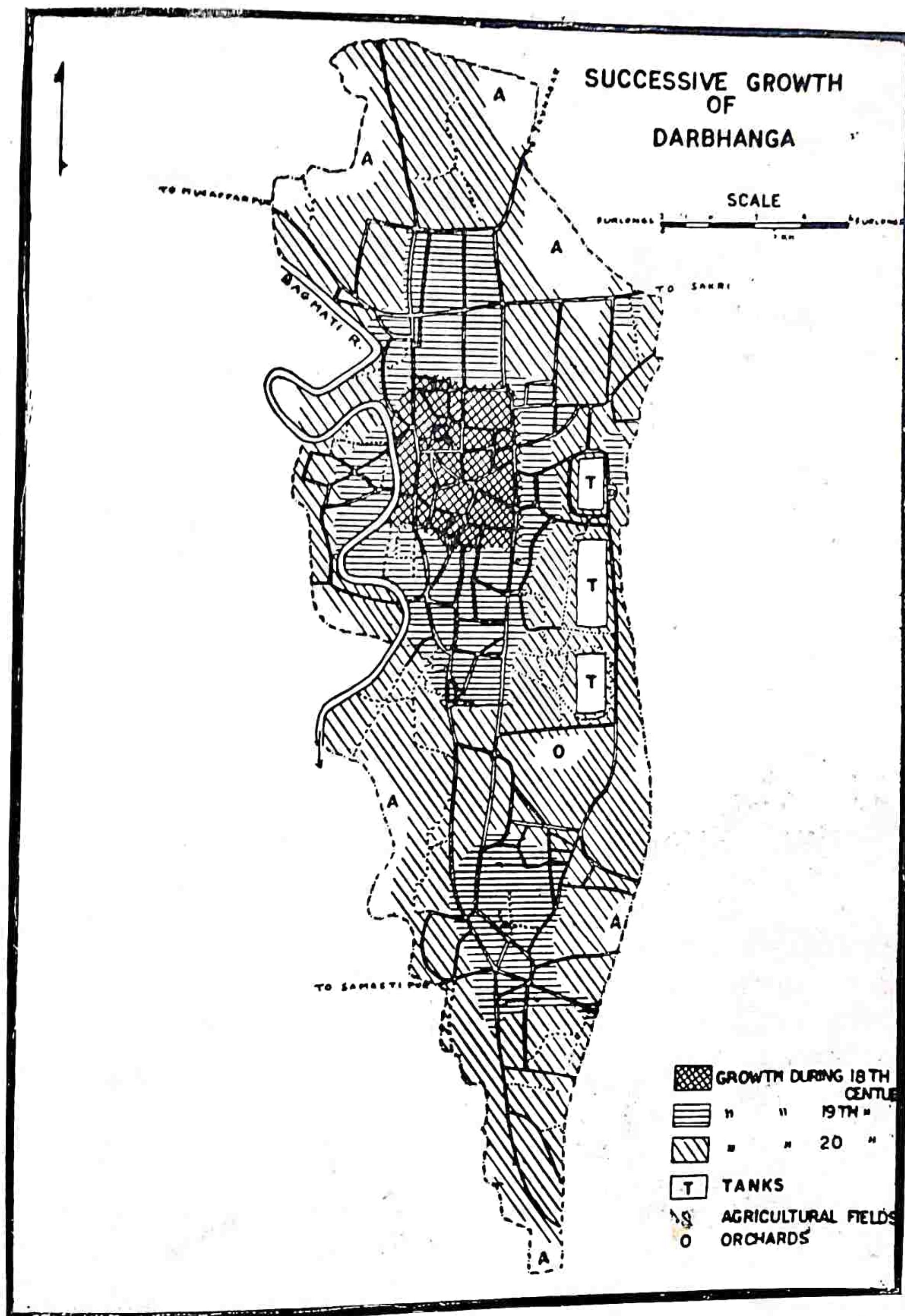


Fig. 1.
Successive Growth of Darbhanga.

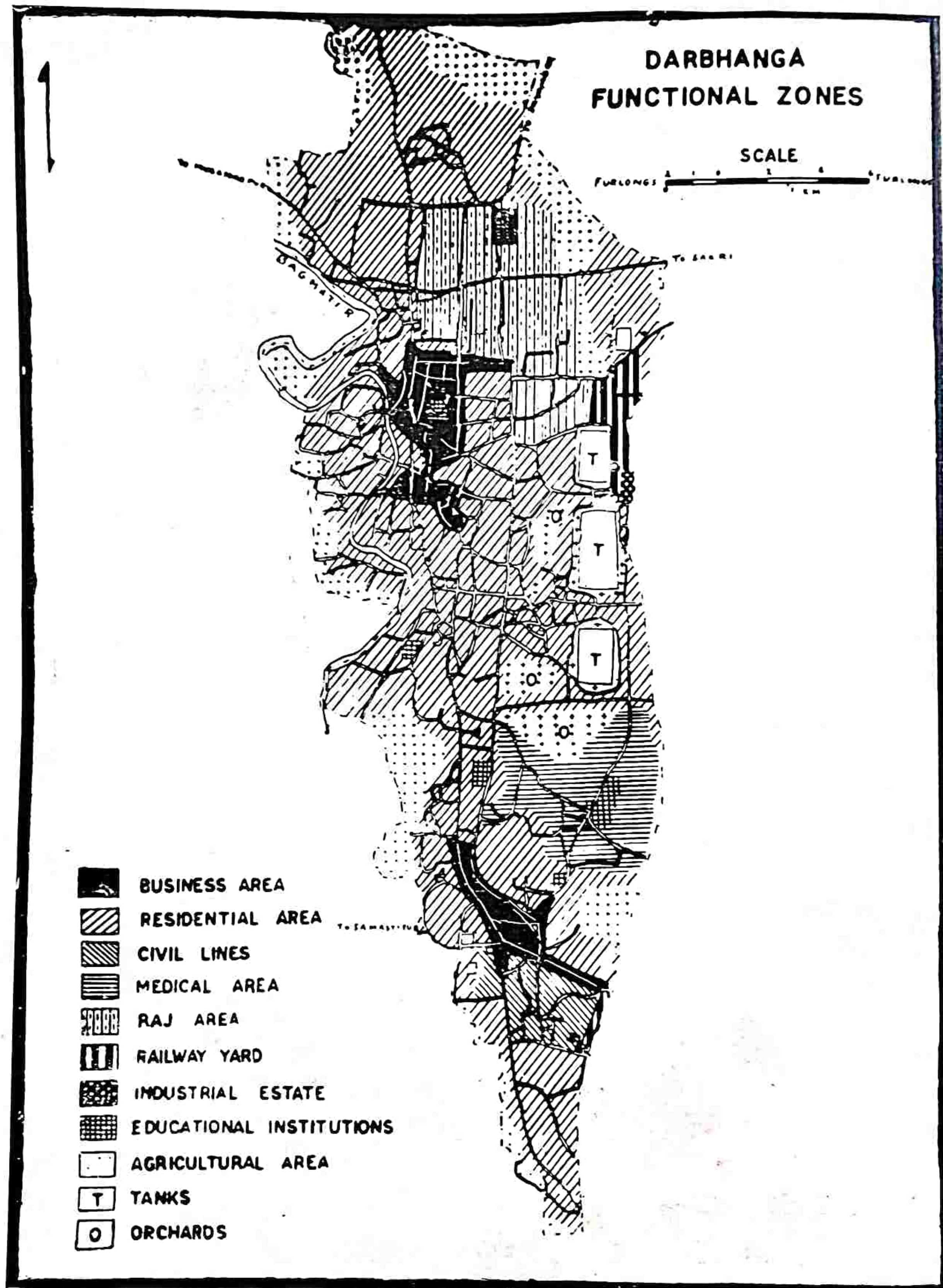


Fig. 2.
Darbhanga—Functional Zones.

of Darbhanga became a reality in 1324 and it became a part and parcel of Tugluq empire. It was renamed as *Tuglaqpur and a great fort and* Jamma Masjid were built here in 1326.[14] Darbhanga *became a mint* town too with the title of 'Iqlim Tugluqpur urf Tirhut'.[15]

(c) *Gajrathpur* :—The next city to emerge *here was Gajrathpur* but the exact origin and site of which are still *shrouded in mystery. From* the available evidence it is not easy to say when and where *this new city* of Gajrathpur came into existence. Some believe that *it appeared at the* present site of Quilaghat on the eastern bank of the *river Baghmati.*

It is believed that there was a king of Mithilā in the 15th century under the Oinwar dynasty by the name of Siva Simha. *This dynasty is* noted for its encouragement of learning and fine arts. Siva Simha was the greatest king of this dynasty and occupied a prominent place in the history of north-eastern India in general and Mithilā in particular. He is said to have made Mithilā an independent State and this period was one of the ups and downs in the history of N. India. 'He was a powerful, kind, a great administrator, and a great general, a patron of learning and art and is noted for his benevolent activity and catholicity of spirit.[16] He fought at a decisive battle with Sultan Ibrahim Shah in 1406. The battle was fought at Shivadhara and it is only 2 miles from Gajrathpur now called Sivasimhapura to the east of river Baghmati. The name Kabaraghat is some times held responsible for its origin to the fact that Moslim soldiers killed in the battle were buried there. The bodies of Hindu soldiers who were killed possibly remained uncared. 'This battle was horribly sanguinary resulting in the conversion of battle field into the gigantic heaps of heads of soldiers, horses, elephant, etc. Siva Simha stubbornly resisted but the fickle fate finally deserted him. His sudden collapse marked the end of glorious area. The kingdom of Gajrathpura assumed a sad spectacle of desertion and gloom'.[17] In course of time they became heaps of bones and were later mixed up with earth. The place is taken to be the origion of Harahi tank. Both Kabaraghat and Harahi are the present mohallas of the town.

The city in a dead alluvial plain is typical of the middle medieval towns but unfortunately nothiug belonging to that period has remained today and we have no source of determining the expansion, alteration of

14 *Ibid.*, p. 35.
15 *JASB* (NS), Vol. XVII, 1921, p. 128.
16 Choudhary, R. K. 'The Oinwars of Mithilā'. *JBRS*, Vol. XI, Part 2, p. 117.
17 Thakur, Upendra, *History Mithilā*, p. 318.

urban pattern. How the area within the citiy was being utilized and what parts of the city were actually under buildings, parks, religious places is not easy to make out as the place has been sacked and pilferaged many a time.

(d) *Darbhanga under Moghals* :—It was under Akbar that Darbhanga was made the seat of imperial Faujdar or the military governor of Sarkar Tirhut and it was included in the province of Bihar. The present mohalla Rasulpur, Mirzapur were the capitals of Abul Rasul Khan and Mirza Abul during the Shajhhan reign. From the reign of Shahjahan onwards the sites of capitals have always changed. The old hamlets like Ram Chawk, Warisnagar, Hasan Chak, Sarae Samserganj, Saudagar Mohalla and Suleman were the sites which the Moghals selected for the residence of faujdars. A number of forts and fortifications came into being as a defence point to protect the military colony against the often repeated raids. Dursng this period its military function was important. As a military centre, it afforded protection to traders and merchants and as such it also became a business centre.

Influence of Maharaja

It was the Maharaja that a more active superimposition of outside culture over the indigenous base took place. The story of city is linked up with the chequered history of Maharaja family and its tradition from Mahesh Thakur[18] to Maharajadhiraj Kameshwar Singh under the Khandavala dynasty. The seat of the chiefs of the Khandavala dynasty at that time was not Darbhanga but Bhour.[19] But a resident officer was always stationed at Darbhanga and the Khandavala chiefs maintained close relationship with the Muslim faujdars. They had their own camp near about Darbhanga town as its present mohallas Maheshpatti, Subhankarpur, Purusottampur, Sundarpur, etc. indicate. But the seat of Khandavala dynasty was permanently transferred to Darbhanga by

18 The Darbhang Raj family traces its origin to Mahesh Thakur who is said to have come from Jubbalpore about the beginning of 16th century. He abtained the present Darbhanga Raj from the Mughal Emperor Akbar in recognition of his scholarship. He and his descendants gradually consolidated the power of the family and about 1700 the title of Raja for the first time conferred on its head by Alivardi Khan and there is a great chain of Raja and their descendants. The last descendant was Maharjadhiraj Kameshwara Singh who died on October 1, 1962, The zamindari has now been taken over by the Govt. of Bihar, after the statutory abolition of the Zamindaries.

19 Bhour is a village situated on the southern outskirts of the Madhubani town.

the Maharaja Pratap Singh (1760-65) and he made it the capital of the Mithilā kingdom.[20]

The period of Khandavala dynasty's influence on the urban pattern and function of Darbhanga was one of great change and urban expansion. As a result of the policies of Maharaja three distinct factors in Darbhanga's growth can be traced.

(1) Unification and stabilization of the place as a capital;

(2) The gradual emergence of Darbhanga as a hub of road in North Bihar; and

(3) Industrialisation of the area.

The combined effect of these three factors triggered the growth of city and transformed the area of greatest economic activity from the original sites. Thus, a new component was added to the pattern of the urbanised area of Darbhanga. Since then the city has always been the seat of the dynasty of the Maharaja family.

British Period (1790—1934)

British influence on the growth of the town began to be felt when the Britishers occupied these territories in 1790 and made Muzaffarpur their headquarters. Later on, in 1845 Darbhanga was made the headquarters of a subdivision. It was constituted to a municipality in 1864 and was made the district headquarters in 1875.[21] The civil officers and officials gradually built their residences and the town changed in look and character. The population of the town increased from 53744 in 1872 to 65955 in 1881 and to 73561 in 1891.[22] In the beginning the civil station was established in Darbhanga proper but several offices of the district headquarters were moved in 1884 to the suburb of Laheriasarai at the extreme south of the town.[23] This was because the countryside around the city towards north and west was swampy and subject to floods in the rainy season. The suburb of Laheriasarai developed as the sub-centre or the neighborhood core areas. A number of retail markets and adjacent retail stores grew up serving the neighbourhood because "as the residential neighbourhood expands outward from the city centre, stores selling convenience goods locate at major street intersections".[24]

20 Choudhary, R. K., 'The Khandavalas of Mithilā'. *JBRS*, Vol. XLVIII, 1962 Maharjadhiraj Dr. K. Singh Memorial Vol., Part I, p. 52.

21 O'Malley, *op. cit.* p. 147.

22 *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Provincial Series, Bengal, Vol. II, 1909, p. 139.

23 Choudhary, P. C. Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 710.

24 Simmons, J. 'The changing pattern of Retaill Location' Research paper no. 92, Department of Geography, University of Chicago, 1964, p. 136.

The overall pattern of development was generally north-south during this period. The city centre expanded in all direction i. e., north-south, east-west, and north-west and south-east direction. The improvements of roads in the city were also made. Shopping areas were intensified, business was accelerated, industry was stimulated and banks, clubs, library, park, playground, electricity and telephone were introduced. Several nuclei which were like beads along various roads also received great impetus to merge together. The lack of concentric growth may be explained in the physical characteristics of the plain and the river in the west and the lowland areas in the east.

The modern phase of development of the city started with the introduction of first railway link with the countryside in 1908.[25] The connection from Samastipur to Darbhanga was finished in 1900 and it was then stopped for a time. The effect of the construction of Darbhaga-Samastipur line was to transform Darbhanga into the most important junction of rail and road link in North Bihar and to stimulate its industrialisation. The city's cultural and commercial contact with Muzaffarpur, Patna and surrounding plains increased considerably. 'Extensive trade between Mithilā and Nepal, Bhutan, Bengal, western India and other parts of the country was in a very flourishing condition'.[26] Since then the communication facilities are constantly improving and recently Darbhanga has become a regional centre of road transport. Roads have been metalled and they meet at the centre of the town. Not it is acting as an important collecting and distributing centre for the agricultural produce of its wide area.

Four distinct elements of the urban pattern of Darbhanga are to be noted.

(1) The location of new railway station to the east of Harahi tank and the lack of urban land-use surrounding it; the location of railway station to the east of civil lines (Laheriasarai);

(2) The north-south linear extension of Darbhanga on the elevated levee of the river Baghmati;

(3) The establishment of new market near railway station (Kathal-

25 Singh, D. N., 'Evolution of Transport in North Bihar'. National Geographical Journal of India, Vol. XI, Part 2, June 1965, p. 94.

26 Thakur, Upendra, 'Socio-economic life in Mithilā under the Khaṇḍavalās'. *JBRS*, Vol. XLVIII, Part 1-4, 1962, Maharajadhiraj Dr. K. Singh Memorial Volume, Part 1, p. 81.

wari) which later served as a point of attraction for this section of the city; and

(4) Both the rail-road and the administrative centre were acting as points of attraction, which gradually drew the area of maximum economic intensity. The coming of the railroad and the resulting industrialisation transferred the balance of activity from the older upper city (Darbhanga Chowk) to the evolving lower area (Laheriasarai Chowk). The lower chowk began to assume a spacious spatial structure of roads and business.

As a result of general improvement of living conditions along with other developments in the city its population has greatly increased since 1891. During 1891-1921, however, the population declined on account of various natural factors resulting in a fall from 73561 in 1891 to 66244 in 1901, 62628 in 1911 and 53700 in 1921.[27] After 1921 economic conditions were satisfactory throughout the decades. In the decade 1921-31 the population of the city increased by 12.99%. and in the decade of 1931-41 the population swelled 14.05%. The city of Darbhanga has experienced a rapid and steady growth of population during the last two decades. In the decade 1941-51 the population has increased 22.56% and in 1951-61 the growth is steady with 21.56%.[28] According to 1961 Census the population of the city is 103106.

Recent Urban Growth

The character of the present urban pattern has been achieved within the short period of 34 years or so. After the disastrous earthquake of 1934[29] the chowk area of Darbhanga tower has completely changed and

27 O'Malley, *op. cit.* p. 147.

28 *Census of India*, 1961, p. 277.

29 The earthquake happened on Monday January 15, 1934. It was one of the biggest seismic disturbances in the history. The tremors extended far beyond the province of Bihar and Orissa but the scens of greatest disturbance was that part of Bihar wich lies north of the Ganges. It the town of Darbhanga thousands of houses were completely destroyed. Some thousands of lives have been lost. The town people who were in greatest distress were small shopkeepers and people of professional classess. Communication lines were shattered. Road and railways were damaged. In many places it changed the level of the town First aid stations were opened at the police lines and on the Darbhanga Raj Maidan. Hospitals were opened on the pologround and the Raj field at Darbhanga. (The Statesman 1934, Record of the Creat Indian Earthquake, p. 13).

modified. Many buildings belonging to Darbhanga Raj were badly affected. Most of the Government buildings in Laheriasarai had collapsed.[30] Thus several parts of the town were reconstructed. Many demolished Government buildings were rebuilt with new designs. So, the calamity has proved a boon to the town.

The country's independence brought manifold changes in the landscape of the city such as the influx of refugees, the expansion of industries, schemes for the development of new residential colonies, the establishment of new offices. The post independence period is characterized by four new developments.

(1) Addition of new residential areas around Raj buildings, chawk area, Laheriasarai chawk;
(2) Ribbon Development of the Government Medical Hospital along Darbhanga and Laheriasarai road;
(3) Incorporation of new area (Maharaja's building used for residential cum teaching and administrative purposes); and
(4) Establishment of Industrial Estate east of Darbhanga Railway Junction.

Tongues of urban settlement have extended beyond the general mass of the city along all the radiating roads. Thus the roads have strongly influenced the city's growth. These settlement projections are evident along Muzaffarpur, Sakri, Jaynagar, Samastipur and Baheri roads. Intervening areas not easily accessible have remained essentially rural even though they are less distant from the city centre.

Present Feature Of Landscape

Business Areas :—The business core of Darbhanga is situated in that portion of city which was first laid out along the bank of the river Bagh-mati. There are two business areas in the city, one is Darbhanga tower in the north and the other is Laheriasarai tower in the south. The distance between the two is about four miles. These two chowks are the chief focil of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The area of Darbhanga tower is mostly pucca built. This part of the city represents a labyrinth of lanes, with lofty buildings in which wheeled traffic is almost impossible.[31] The roads are irregular, tortuous and crooked in nature and creat

30 Choudhary, P. C. Roy, *Inside Bihar*. Calcutta, 1962, p. 116.

31 Brush, John, E., 'The Morphology of Indian Cities' in India's Urban Future, edited by Roy and Turner, Berkeley, 1962, p. 59.

a complex web of traffic arteries[32]. The main bazar is crowded with numerous small retail shops which deal in food or cloth, hardware, jewellery, grain and cloth. Gudri and Katki bazar are centres of grain merchants. There is a street where vegetables are sold. Another part of street is inhabited by goldsmiths, money lenders, medical practitioners etc. The chawk area is dotted with retail shops, business, offices, banks, insurance, hotels and restaurants. The main road connecting Darbhanga tower to Laheriasarai is lined with shops and small business houses. There are neighbourhood business areas specialising in the commodities of every day use such as food stuffs, vegetables, tea stalls etc. Similarly the chowk of Laheriasarai is full of small shops, hotels and restaurants to cater to the needs of the employees of the Collectorate and other Governmental offices. This tower is also called the lower bazar. Its rise is of recent date compared to old Darbhanga tower. Here the roads are broad and shops are not closely spaced. Shops are aligned along the main thoroughfares usually radiating from the chawk and are of retail nature and include general merchandise clothing, furniture, drugs and chemicals, footwear, etc. A separate market dealing in vegitables and grain commodities named Gudri Bazar is situated in the middle of the bazar. Besides: two small retail centres are also found in Kathalbari and along Hospital road. Kathalbari retail centres cater to the needs of railwaymen and drugs and medicines are sold near the Hospital road.

Residential Buildings (Fig. 2)

Since 1934 a large number of new buildings have been constructed in the court area, Raj area, Kathalbari, Missartola, Rahamganj, Balbhadrapur, Maheshpatti, Subhankarpur, Mirzapur, Quilaghat and Bengalitola. But many of these construction are built in a haphazard manner. The residential buildings of Darbhanga occupy fairly a large portion of total land, roughly three-fifths of the area of the city. They do not form a continuous belt "but occur in a purely random, hit or miss fashion".[33] In the central portion the commrcial belt encroaches upon the residential buildings. That is why the residential block tends to shift laterally towards the peripheral areas and vertically in the central areas. Open areas fall mostly on the peripheries of the city and have a less density of population, with population falling off considerably. The highest class residential buildings have been generally constructed in these

32 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

33 Quinn, J. A., *Urban Sociology*, New Delhi, 1967, p. 97.

open areas. Civil officers connected with district and local administration prefer to line in quiet and open bungalows near the civil lines where they find the society of their choice. The middle areas and edges of the central area are built of pucca and kuchcha houses in which medium class workers reside.

Raj Area

The only clear spot in the town is the Raj area. It is a completely planned area covering about 55 acres of land. The streets are well planned. The structures are exclusively pucca. Buildings stand in the midst of large fenced compounds with much space devoted to gardens. 'The typical residence called the Bungalow is a large rambling house with thick walls and high ceilings, large windows, a large verandah running all around is either flat cement roofed or sloping tile roofed'.[34] The Maharaja has constructed many such buildings of magnificent build and architecture such as : (a) Rambagh Palace—This is the oldest building built by Maharaja Madhava Singh (1776-1808). Family ceremonies are still performed here, (b) Nargauna Palace—This was built by Dutch engineers at the order of Maharaja Chhatra Singh (1808-39). It was formerly known as Chhatrabhavana, (c) Anandbagh Palace—This was built by Maharaja Shiva Singh (1840-98). It is the seat of official function of the Raj.

Medical College and Hospital area

Outside the Raj area the distinctive and dominant buildings are found in the Medical College. The Medical College and Hospital buildings are located in northern part of Laheriasarai and are 3 miles south of Darbhanga railway junction. The existence of the hospital dates back to 1926 when the Temple Medical College, Patna was shifted to Darbhanga and was named Darbhanga Medical Collage Hospital.[35] Following the princely donation of Rs. 5 lakh by the late Maharajadhiraj Sir Rameshwar Singh, the district hospital with a few additions and alterations in its buildings went up to serve as medical school hospital. Later, with the upgradation of the school in 1946 the institution developed into a full-fledged medical college hospital. The old hospital which was situated at Laheriasarai near the district jail shifted to the existing site three years after the terrible earthquake of 1934 rocked and smashad the hospital buildings constructed in 1907, out of a donation by Rai Banwarilal, a local Zamindar.[36] The hospital provides facilities for specialised treatment of

34 Brush, John. E., *op. cit.* p. 61.

35 Choudhary, P. C. Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 619.

36 *Indian Nation*, Tuesday, Oct. 17, 1967, p. 5.

all sorts of diseases as also facilities for clinincal studies to over 800 under graduate and 100 post-graduate students. It accomodates about 770 beds out of which 450 are for males, 270 for females and 50 beds for children. It draws patients from all over north Bihar, adjoining parts of Nepal, U. P. and West Bengal in particular and from the whole country in general.

Educational Services

The town is the educational focus of the region as it has been from remote times a seat of Hindu learning. There are a number of colleges and educational institutions in the town, e. g. Chandradhari Mithila Collage (1938), Millat College (1958), Marwari College, (1959), Maharani Adhirani Rameshawari Girls Tutorial Collage, Homeopath College and Aurvedic College. A Law College is also functioning in the premises of C. M. Collage. The growing desire for learning technology gave rise to the eastablishment of Technical School of Engineering. The Mithila Research Institute is an institution which provides facilities for research in advance studies. Recently Sanskrit University has also been established. Of late, there has been rising demand for eastablishment of Mithila University at Darbhanga which is likely to be accepted.

Industries And other Services

The main iudustries of the town are rice mills, oil mills, metal utensils, trunk making, wooden furniture making, earthen pot making, handloom weaving etc. There are four small and big rice mills and 37 flour mills. There are two metal Engineering factories which produce a number of agricultural implements. The Mithila Engineering Company situated on the eastern side of Dighi produces some engineering appliances, e. g. plane table, drawing board, bolts and nuts and other instruments. Apart from these scattered small mills there is a Govt. Footwear Factory (1959) located on the eastern side of Darbhanga railway junction. It contains general engineering works where improved agricultural implements, gates, steel window, steel furniture, utensils, Ankle boots, hospital equipment, wooden goods etc. are manufactured.

The development of industry particularly printing press and provision of various public utility services such as electricity, water supply, drainage, etc. have accelerated the pace of urban growth. There are four picture houses spread throughout the city. These houses are mostly situated on the main road of Laheriasarai and Darbhanga tower. The temples are mostly found in the Raj area and along the Baghmati river. It indicates the predominance of Hindu population in these areas. The concen-

tration of mosque is mostly found in S. W. and Central part of the city. One mosque is centered at the Chawk area of Darbhanga tower. Most of the schools and colleges have attached play-grounds. Pologround is the biggest field used for public meetings in Laheriasarai.

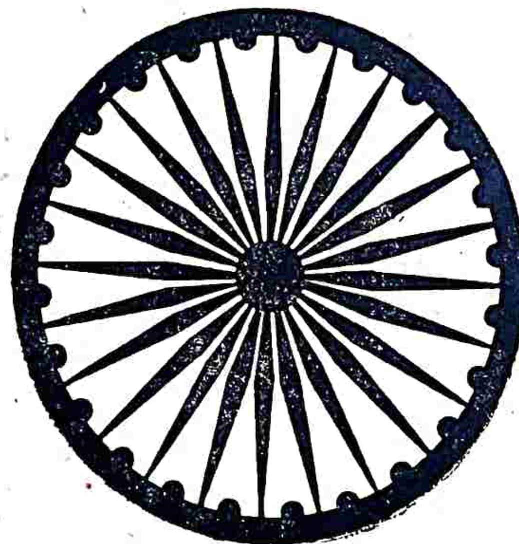
The morphology of the town has been remarkably determined by the river, railway, roads and tanks. The townscape from a distance or from air appears striking with mango groves, ribbon roads and palm trees. The city has more than doubled its population and yet retains a remarkable conformity to past urban pattern. The city was able to incorporate many new non-urbanised area. Each historic period has contributed to the urban complex of the city. There was no qualitative change but one continuous evolution from point of origin to the present time except the separate admininistrative nuclei Laheriasarai which ultimately merged with Darbhanga.

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